

## CHAPTER 1

### The Way You Do Anything...

*But I have no mind for business and considered staying awake to be enough of an accomplishment.*

—David Sedaris, *Me Talk Pretty One Day*



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**M**y dear friend and client Pat Mussieux followed me around the world for two years. She traveled anywhere I spoke just to ask me the same question over and over again. After two years, I finally told her, “I will only continue with you as a client if you stop asking me this question.” She agreed.

Pat’s question was: “So many of us want to build a successful business. How did you do it?” The answer I gave her never varied: It was about being extraordinary in everything I did.

When I think about being extraordinary—where that ability comes from and how you harness it—I think about being four years old. I was a little four-year-old, very small for my age. (Looking at the jacket cover, I know it’s hard to imagine me ever being little, but back then, I was.) I also had extremely small feet. All year, I had been taking ballet lessons at Miss Anne Clark’s School of Dance. I took those dance lessons very seriously. Then in spring, when weather started changing, excitement started growing. I traded my sweater for a long-sleeved T-shirt, and everything started to feel different because summer was on its way! It was time for Mother’s Day, and preschool graduation, and the big dance recital. Even if you or your children haven’t ever had recitals, you can probably imagine the feeling as the day draws closer.

I was pretty excited about my first performance; we had been rehearsing for months for this moment. My feet were so small that I couldn’t wear the ballet slippers that all the other kids were wearing. I had to wear little white gymnast slippers because they couldn’t find ballet shoes to fit me, but I didn’t mind because the rest of my costume was so spectacular. I got to wear a little white tutu, and the best part about it was that it had a little shimmer to it. It also had a vest that laced up with red, yellow, and green satin ribbons, and a matching headpiece with the same color ribbons hanging down. In my mind, that was long hair, and I was Diana Ross. And as if a tremendous costume like this wasn’t enough, I also got to have my hair and makeup done.

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Soon, it was showtime. I was pretty nervous; there were only five of us in the class so we would all be in the front row, sharing the spotlight. We were also the first group to perform at the big recital.

Looking back, I realize the reason they put my group on first was because we were the little babies, and they didn't want us to have to wait through a two-hour recital before it was our turn to dance. You get the kids on, you get them off, and you get them home and in bed.

We were sitting backstage, nervous and playing and just being kids. All the parents were sitting backstage as well, giving much-needed encouragement: "Do your best. Do your best. You know this. You can do this." Meanwhile, they were thinking to themselves: "Don't embarrass me. Don't humiliate me. I've paid \$78 a month for you to take these classes. Don't mess this up."

But you don't say *that* to a four-year-old.

When we were ready, all the parents went out and lined up with their cameras. They were probably even more eager and anxious than we were—on the edge of their seats to see their daughters' first dance recital.

The wranglers were backstage keeping us quiet and together in a group until the perfect moment when they pushed us onto the stage. And suddenly, there we were.

Our routine started in second position. Arms in circular position, and feet as wide as a four year old can make them. I felt ready. I told my four-year-old self, "I can do this. I got this. I got this. It's alright. Keep breathing. I got this." I took a big, deep breath. Then, I looked to my right, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw my friend Belinda. I thought to myself, "Something's not right with her. She's going to do something strange. I can tell." As I was watching Belinda, a tension started to build in the audience; they could see even more than I could. Before I realized what was happening, Belinda hit the floor like a ton of bricks and went into a deep crying wail, prostrate on the stage.

I was still thinking, "You got this. It's alright. Don't look at her."

So instead, I breathed and looked left, and I realized that there was trouble over there, too. At this point, there were three parents in the

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second row mimicking second position, trying to keep us focused on the dance routine instead of on Belinda. They were probably thinking, “Get your little ass into second position. I just spent \$38 on hair and makeup and \$32 on a damn tutu! Second position!”

Trouble on the left; disaster on the right. But I kept my cool, saying, “I got this. It’s ok. Ignore them all!”

Trying to ignore Belinda and the parents, I looked around at my peers and realized that I was next to the chubby girl in the class. My mind raced, thinking, “She’s the kind of kid that’s going to take people out with her. I just know it.” I can’t remember her name but I remember that when she looked at me, I knew she could read my mind: “You come near me, and I’m going to push you off the stage. I am in second position. And I am wearing a shiny tutu. Don’t you touch it!” I think I scared her, because she looked away very quickly. Then, before I knew it, she made a turn and grabbed another little girl’s tutu, pulled her off stage—and they ran like hell. You know those types of people, the ones who think, “If I’m going down, I’m taking somebody with me.” Do you have any of those people in your life? I knew from the moment that girl stood beside me that day that she was one of them.

Before I knew it, I was in the middle of a ballet recital war. It looked like we were on a battlefield, with soldiers in tutus scattered everywhere. Two moms in the third and fourth row were crying, with tears running down their cheeks. One was panicking, and one of the fathers was patting her arm. At that point, I realized that I better think of something. And this is my most vivid memory of that day: I looked down at my tiny feet in those little, white shoes. I took a big, deep breath and proceeded to break into the biggest tap dance you have ever seen.

I was just tapping and tapping. I tapped to the left until I hit one end of the stage, stepping over the ballet bodies. I just tap danced, back and forth, never stopping. This went on for a good seven minutes. By that point, my headpiece was off to one side, almost falling off my head completely. I was pouring sweat and my legs hurt. I was

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exhausted, so I decided to start walking and waving to give myself a breather. By now, the parents that had been crying were actually taking pictures, so, I stopped, smiled, and posed as they all laughed and clapped.

Then, the next terrifying thought came to mind. “How do I end something like this?” So, I was walking and waving and stepping over bodies, and, when I got to the middle of the stage, I made my big finish: a semi-well-done split, hands on my hips. The audience exploded in applause. I got up, took a bow, and walked off stage, telling the other dancers, on my way out, “Get up.”

As soon as I got off stage, my mom, my dad, and Miss Anne were all standing and waiting for me. Then, the moment I got backstage, the tears just started streaming down my cheeks as I clasped my hands.

My dad asked, “Why are you crying?”

I quietly replied, “I was scared to death.”

He said, “You didn’t seem scared to death.”

And I said, “No, I was!”

He said, “Honey, what just happened? If you were so scared to death, you didn’t have to do it.”

And I said, “I did have to do it.”

He said, “Why?”

I said, “I had promised.”

He took me, gave me a big hug and said, “That’s commitment.”

Then, Miss Anne leaned over and said, “That is Suzanne. I know you did it because you promised. But can I ask you a question? Why a tap dance?”

My answer: “It was just better than ballet. The audience was so sad. I wanted them to smile.”

It takes guts to be extraordinary. I fully believe I had a lot more guts back when I was four years old than I do now. As we grow up and become adults, we just worry more—about how we will look, what people will think, and who we will offend.

At that dance recital, my only focus was to be extraordinary. That was all I wanted—and not someone else’s version of extraordinary,



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but mine. I was less worried about the kids to the left and right and more concerned about the audience. That day, those people were my customers, and I wanted to make them happy.

Business takes guts. It requires that you be willing to be extraordinary, even when you have no clue if anyone will support you. Paying attention to every detail of my life left me lonely at times, but you have to be willing to be a little lonely, since it's the only way to truly focus on yourself. You have to fully commit to do and be whatever it takes to be successful. And the first step is doing what no one else is willing to do.

If the way you do anything is the way you do everything, consider your performance strategy. In other words, how do you know, without fail, that you have put in enough time and sweat to be extraordinary? Great basketball players shoot thousands of shots in dark gymnasiums when other kids go out to party. Great pastors read the Bible and revise their sermons while other people go home early. Legendary musicians play the same scales over and over while others catch up on their sleep. At what point do they decide *that's good enough?* Do they ever?



The film company describes the documentary *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* as “The story of 85-year-old Jiro Ono, considered by many to be the world’s greatest sushi chef. He is the proprietor of Sukiyabashi Jiro, a ten-seat, sushi-only restaurant inauspiciously located in a Tokyo subway station. Despite its humble appearances, it is the first restaurant of its kind to be awarded a prestigious three-star Michelin Guide rating, and sushi lovers from around the globe make the pilgrimage to this spot, calling months in advance and shelling out top dollar for a coveted seat at Jiro’s sushi bar.”

Many people would call Jiro talented, gifted, or passionate, but Jiro himself has a simpler explanation. He says:

*Once you decide on your occupation, you must immerse yourself in and fall in love with your work.... Never complain about your job. You must dedicate*



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*your life to mastering your skill. That's the secret of success, and is the key to being regarded honorably.*

## SUCCESS TAKES IMMERSION

I remember the summer 2008 Olympics in Beijing when swimmer Michael Phelps did something *never* done before. He became a legend, and I wondered how much he had endured in the years leading up to his record-breaking performance:

- How many early morning swims?
- How many pulled muscles?
- How many wins?
- How many losses?
- How much money had he saved?
- How much money had he spent?
- How many heartbreaks had he experienced?
- How many days did he have, days when he felt like he couldn't go on?
- Were there days when he knew he could do it?

In his 2004 autobiography *Beneath the Surface*, Phelps explains:

*There are times in my sleep when I literally dream my race from start to finish. Other nights...I visualize to the point that I know exactly what I want to do: dive, glide, stroke, flip, reach the wall, hit the split time to the hundredth, then swim back again for as many times as I need to finish the race. [p. 23]*

It's amazing when you consider what goes into winning an Olympic gold medal. What does it take? Some of it, like hard work, commitment, and dedication, is obvious. But there's something that isn't so obvious, and that's willpower.

- To find out what you really want for your life and business, you have to ask yourself what you are willing to sacrifice, to do, to be, and to try. How *willing* are you to fail?



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- How *willing* are you to try something new?
- How *willing* are you to leave others behind so you can grow?
- How *willing* are you to get up again?
- What are you *willing* to start doing?
- What are you *willing* to stop doing?

For the first three years of growing my business, I kept a hand-made sign on my desk that read: THERE ARE NO CINDERELLA STORIES. And there aren't.

Will must be the entrepreneur's highest value. Are you playing to win or are you just hoping to stay in the race?

What are you willing to do *today* to dramatically stretch you toward your goals? What is your version of a legend? When you close your eyes, what do you see?

### Chapter 1 Homework

That's right: There's homework at the end of every chapter.

What, you think you just get to sit here and read? My clients know that I expect them to work. I tell them every day, "This shit is hard; that's why it works."

I know we're only a few pages in, but I'm asking you to change up your game. It's why at the end of each chapter I'm going to ask you the big questions you need to consider if you're ready to make that change. Each question is strongly connected to the material I've written about, and while they may seem small or inconsequential, the truth is they'll give you a hell of a lot of insight into your character and how you show up in life.

If you're the type of person who skips over the exercises and says, "That's not for me," then you might as well throw this book out, because the odds are, you're skipping over the other hard work that's going to make a difference.

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So, you can do things as you've always done and keep getting what you've already got, or you can pay attention to the questions I'm going to ask and start creating some new results.

The truth is it doesn't matter much to me either way, but for you, well, that's a totally different story. This chapter described a few things to keep in mind as you work to transition yourself and your business.

- 1. Beware those who want to pull you down with them.** We all have people in our lives who are determined to take us down the rabbit hole. They are the ones who are too scared to try, or want to quit halfway through, and they don't want to do it alone.

Who in your life wants to take you down when they feel like quitting? Go on, list them. (Don't worry; we won't tell them.)

- 2. Commitment to oneself is the cornerstone of success.** If you don't believe what you promise, there's no way anyone else will either.

Where have you made commitments for your clients, loved ones, and even yourself when you failed to follow through?

What did that cost you personally and professionally?

How might things have been different had you seen your promise through?

- 3. It takes guts to be extraordinary.** I've already shared with you that I had a hell of a lot more guts at age four than I do now (and I'm a gutsy gal).

Name your earliest memory of doing something extraordinary. Tell the story. What was going on in your life

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and in the moment? Spell it all out. Bring to mind the drama and the detail. Who was with you and why did you decide to step up and be better than you ever had before?

Now ask yourself what's changed since then? Why aren't you willing to take those steps again? What's holding you back? What excuses are standing in the way?

**4. Success is lonely.** Those who are truly successful are willing to do the things that others simply aren't.

What's the one thing in your life that no one else is willing to do?

How different would your life be if you took those extra steps and did the things others wouldn't?

